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ABSTRACT

One dominant metaphor in the standards-based movement to "professionalize" teaching is that of art and artist. The images of "performance" and "portfolio" are constantly in use, and since these metaphors can lead to interesting insights, pushing them to their logical conclusions is the purpose of this paper. It draws on the extensive literature in art criticism and asks if a portfolio evaluation is an oxymoron. Portfolios have been suggested as desirable evaluation tools because they are open-ended and allow for individual interpretation and reflection. Evaluation, however, requires a common structure and externally imposed, standardized value judgments--conditions that are difficult to create. The paper describes the ongoing press for professionalism in education and the emergence during the 1980s of a literature that portrayed teaching as art or craft. The text parallels art, craft, and professionalism, placing side by side the work of teaching and the work of art. The national professional standards movement, with a focus on school leadership, is likewise detailed. (Contains 36 references.) (RJM)

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Whoever Heard of Standardized Art?
The Complexity of Using Portfolios for Licensing Principals

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Whoever Heard of Standardized Art?
The Complexity of Using Portfolios for Licensing Principals

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One dominant metaphor in the standards-based movement to "professionalize" teaching is that of art and artist embodied by references to teacher "performance" and "portfolios" (ASCD, 1996; Collins, 1991; Danielson, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1996). Both performances and portfolios are offered as alternatives to monitoring behavior and evaluating only the "observables" in teaching (Blake, Bachman, Frys, Holbert, Ivan & Sellitto, 1995; Brauchle, McClarty, & Parker, 1989; Tuckman, 1995; Valencia & Au, 1997). The move to "professionalize" school leadership has paralleled the metaphorical shift in professionalizing teaching. Prospective school administrators are expected to prove standards of leadership through performance assessments and portfolios (Cornett & Hill, 1992; Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996; Kentucky Office of Teacher Education and Certification, in press; Morgan, Gibbs, Hertzog, & Wylie, 1997; Sunstein, 1992).

The purpose of this paper is to press the metaphor to its logical conclusions and address questions surrounding attainment and measurement of excellence in an art form. In the first part of the paper, I describe the ongoing press for professionalism in education and the emergence during the 1980s in the literature of descriptions of teaching as art or craft. Then I briefly describe the national professional standards movement with a focus on school leadership. Finally I raise questions about the standardization and evaluation of principals' portfolios.

Art, Craft and/or Professionalism

Language connotation is often at the center of postmodern critiques. Complex ideas require thorough reflection. The actors in education are playing out complex roles. Not surprisingly, we struggle in finding words to describe these complex parts and relationships.

In the 80s, an unparalleled, sustained interest in schooling emerged. Although the focus never wavered from student accomplishments, all aspects of the teaching/learning process have been examined. The nature of teaching became the center of discourse, and once again, the

issues of "professionalism" ascended into the debate (Eisner, 1983; Greene, 1984; Lanier, 1984; Leinhart, 1990; Shulman, 1987).

Professionalism has a checkered history in education (Ginsburg, 1997; Lanier, 1984). Some have argued that recent professionalization of everything from secretarial work to car sales has cheapened the concept of professionalism (Metzger, 1987). Others have illustrated how expert images of professionals disempower those the professionals supposedly serve (Illich, 1973; McClure & Lindle, 1997).

In its recent incarnation, the professionalism of teachers was to move attention to teaching beyond a scrutiny of disembodied behaviors to analysis of the integrated judgments attached to teacher performance (Eisner, 1983; Lanier, 1984; Leinhart, 1990; Shulman, 1987). The demonized "strawman" in this scenario was the school administrator/supervisor whose behavioral checklists applied little sensitivity to the intricate nuances of teacher expertise and/or student needs and demands (Lanier, 1984). Yet, some discussions of the 80s also suggested that school administrators had been as equally infantilized by the objectivism of behavioral checklists as teachers (Eisner, 1983; National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration, 1987).

The distinction of educator-as-professional pushes practice beyond prescriptive routines (Greene, 1984; Lanier, 1984). Instead, the complexity and peculiar exigencies of practice are honored in the appreciation of education as art (Eisner, 1983).

In the world of art appreciation, the assessment of art via checklists is rare. Thus, a sensitivity to the non-routine and non-predictable nature of education, further indicts the behavioristic paradigm for assessing practice (Boyer, 1990; Lanier, 1984; Leinhart, 1990; Shulman, 1987). Art requires interpretation and explanation; it requires critique and invites comparison; it does not lend itself to quantification (Boyer, 1990). These artistic concerns suggested a departure in approaches to evaluation of professional educational practice (ASCD, 1996; Blake, Bachman, Frys, Holbert, Ivan & Sellitto, 1995; Brauchle, McClarty, & Parker, 1989; Collins, 1991; Danielson, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Tuckman, 1995; Valencia & Au, 1997). The metaphorical shift pressed the discourse around educators' certification and evaluation to more aesthetic means of analyzing classroom and leadership performance:

standards and portfolios (Collins, 1991; Cornett & Hill, 1992; Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996; Danielson, 1996; Kentucky Office of Teacher Education and Certification, in press; Lewis, 1997; Morgan, Gibbs, Hertzog, & Wylie, 1997; Sunstein, 1992; Valencia & Au, 1997).

Standards for School Leadership

The professional standards movement is curiously two-faced. While claiming a distance from the minimal behavioral competency movement of the 70s and 80s, standards are often derided for being too vague to be useful (Lanier, 1984; Newmann, 1997; Taylor, 1994).

The goal of standards is to provide meaningful indicators of student learning and educators' contributions to student learning (CCSSO, 1996; Fischer, 1997; Muth, Gerlertner, Martin, Lyons, & Grabinger, 1997; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1989; Tracz, et al., 1995). Standards pave the way for evaluation and assessment of professional educators.

While the press for teacher standards has nearly a ten-year history, administrator standards were slow to develop. Several states made their own attempts at providing standards for school leaders (e.g., Colorado, Kentucky, North Carolina, Texas) (Lewis, 1997; Muth, Gerlertner, Martin, Lyons, & Grabinger, 1997). The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) assumed national leadership on the issue of administrators' standards. CCSSO formed the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) (CCSSO, 1996).

The result of CCSSO's leadership is six standards[1] for the purpose of assessing school

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[1] Each of the standards have indicators referring to knowledge, dispositions, and performances. The six standards are as follows:

[1] A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

[2] A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to students learning and staff professional growth.

[3] A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

[4] A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse

leaders' readiness for a principalship (CCSSO, 1996; Lewis, 1997). The Educational Testing Service is developing the assessment. Also in-the-works, is a portfolio system based on the standards for administrators' career development (Lewis, 1997; Van Meter personal communication, 1997).

The intertwining of high-stakes assessment of the ISLLC standards for licensure with a career development portfolio is confusing. It is also illustrative of the problems inherent in a portfolio evaluation system.

The Riddle of Portfolio Evaluation

Is portfolio evaluation an oxymoron? Portfolios have been suggested as desirable evaluation tools because they are more likely to capture the authentic complexities of practice, but such complexity also problematizes evaluation (Danielson, 1996; Tuckman, 1995; Wolf, 1991).

The desirable features of portfolios are not desirable features for evaluation. Portfolios are desirable because they are open-ended and allow for individual interpretation and reflection (Collins, 1991; Setteducati, 1995). Evaluation, however, requires a common structure and externally-imposed, standardized value judgments (Collins, 1991; Setteducati, 1995; Stroble, 1992; Tuckman, 1995). While there are strategies for managing portfolios, questions remain about their usefulness (Lindle & Williams, in press; Morgan, Gibbs, Hertzog, & Wylie, 1997). No one has suggested that portfolios can stand alone in the assessment of professional educators.

Conclusion

This paper has been an opportunity to reflect on the direction of the standards movement in administrator preparation. Pausing to contemplate our actions is a luxury that even the standards movement doesn't address. Perhaps my concern about the implications of standards

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community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
[5] A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
[6] A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. (CCSSO, 1996)

for the art of school administration is really a typical contemplative question. That is, what is the meaning of our work here? Perhaps the question of meaningfulness is where both portfolios and evaluation should be tested. Can portfolios be meaningful reflections of practice? Can evaluation by any other names be meaningful assessments of practice?

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